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WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

PLENARY Second Session Geneva, February 8 to 12, 1999

REPORT

adopted by correspondence

INTRODUCTION

1. The Standing Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT) held its second Plenary (“SCIT Plenary”) session in Geneva from February 8 to 12, 1999.
2. The following Member States of WIPO and/or the Paris Union were represented at the session: Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zambia (73).

3. Representatives of the Benelux Trademark Office (BBM), the European Communities (EC), the Eurasian Patent Office (EAPO), the European Patent Office (EPO), the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI) and the African Regional Industrial Property Organization (ARIPO) (6) took part in the session in a member capacity.
4. Representatives of the following organizations took part in the session in an observer capacity: International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), Association for the International Collective Management of Audiovisual Works (AGICOA), Ibero-Latin American Federation of Performers (FILAIE), International Council on Archives (ICA), International Federation of Industrial Property Attorneys (FICPI), International League of Competition Law (LIDC), International Publishers Association (IPA), League of Arab States (LAS), Organization of African Unity (OAU), World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises (WASME) and World Federation of Music Schools (WFMS) (13). The list of participants appears as Annex I to this report.
5. The session was opened by Mr. R.A. Mashelkar (India), Chair of the SCIT Plenary. Mr. K.-P. Wittig, Deputy Director, Inter-Office Information Services and Operational Affairs Department, WIPO, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Director General.
6. Mr. K.-P. Wittig acted as Secretary of the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. The SCIT Plenary unanimously adopted the agenda, which appears as Annex II to this report.

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

8. As decided by the Governing Bodies of WIPO at their tenth series of meetings (see document AB/X/32, paragraphs 51 and 52), held from September 24 to October 2, 1979, the report of this session reflects only the conclusions (decisions, recommendations, opinions, etc.) of the SCIT Plenary and does not, in particular, reflect the statements made by any participants, except where any reservation in respect of any specific conclusion of the SCIT Plenary was made or repeated after the conclusion was arrived at.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS BY THE CHAIR

9. The Chair presented a written draft Summary of Discussions (document SCIT/2/7) reflecting the major topics covered and the conclusions reached by the SCIT Plenary. A revised version of the text of that document, reflecting all comments on the draft Summary agreed upon during the closing session on February 12, 1999, is recorded in paragraphs 10 to 42, below.

REPORT OF SCIT/1

10. The SCIT Plenary adopted the draft report of its first session, document SCIT/1/7 Prov., with a few amendments. The final report, document SCIT/1/7, was made available during the session and will be posted on WIPO's Web site and mailed to Member States, Member Organizations and Observers.

FIRST SESSION OF THE SCIT WORKING GROUPS (Document SCIT/WG/1/12)

11. The SCIT Plenary noted the report of the first session of the SCIT Working Groups and reviewed the decisions taken and recommendations made by them at that session, and reached the following conclusions:

Revision of WIPO Standard ST.14 (Project SCIT P 1/98 and Document SCIT/WG/1/7)

12. The SCIT Plenary agreed to adopt the revised WIPO Standard ST.14, as presented by the Standards and Documentation Working Group (SDWG) within the scope of Task Nos. 7(a) and (b) and to request industrial property offices to apply the provisions of the revised Standard as from April 1, 1999. The revised Standard ST.14 is reproduced as Annex III to this report. Finally, the SCIT Plenary agreed to consider Task No. 7 of the SCIT Work Program completed.

Revision of WIPO Standards ST.30, ST.31, ST.32, ST.33, ST.35 and ST.40 (Project SCIT P 2/98)

13. The International Bureau reported that the revised version of WIPO Standard ST.33 had been issued to offices in December 1998 for approval. In accordance with the direction given by the SDWG, as no comments to the contrary had been received, the revised version was now considered approved. The effective date of use of the revised version of the Standard would be determined in consultation with interested offices and would be notified in a circular letter to be issued by the International Bureau.

Proposed new Tasks

14. The SCIT Plenary agreed to create three new Tasks as proposed by the SDWG during its first meeting (see document SCIT/WG/1/12, paragraphs 28 and 44), to assign them to the SDWG and to include them in the revised SCIT Work Program as Task Nos. 39, 40 and 41, with the following wording:

Task No. 39	Investigate, in the light of the revised Standard ST.14, whether any other WIPO Standard, such as ST.6, ST.10/B, ST.11, ST.12, ST.16, ST.19, ST.30, ST.32, ST.35 and ST.40, requires revision in order to clarify how a patent document should be uniquely identified;
Task No. 40	Investigate whether provisions on how to cite industrial property documents other than patent documents, such as industrial design documents, should be given under Standard ST.14;
Task No. 41	Investigate the possibility of enhancing and extending the natural language search and classification system of INPI (France) to cover the official UN languages and the utility of such technologies for automatic search enhancement and classification systems.

15. The International Bureau made available, during the session of the SCIT Plenary, an updated version of document SCIT/WG/1/4 “Establishment of a technical inventory (Task No. 35),” the first issue of which was considered by the Information Infrastructure Working Group (IIWG) in November 1998. The updated document has the identification number SCIT/WG/1/4 Rev.

WIPO GLOBAL INFORMATION NETWORK (Document SCIT/2/2)

16. The SCIT Plenary noted progress concerning the development of the Global Information Network Request for Proposals (RFP). The Member States engaged in a brief discussion of the RFP status, the revised timelines, and certain technical details related to RFP requirements. The International Bureau reiterated that this RFP covered only the first, most basic phase of implementation, i.e., the extension of public Internet connectivity to each intellectual property office, and the implementation of a Global Information Network backbone. The public Internet connectivity would exhibit the characteristics of a Virtual Private Network through its security features, and the backbone would provide improved international connectivity for all offices. The International Bureau briefly mentioned that later phases of the WIPONET Program would cover connectivity enhancements and extensions, as well as further development related to the Intellectual Property Digital Libraries Program.

17. In addition, the SCIT Plenary took note of the proposed set of milestones for the RFP, and discussed some of the factors that had delayed the release. These factors included a desire on the part of the International Bureau for further coordination with other WIPO projects, and the necessity for carefully planning implementation details to avoid unnecessary cost.

18. The International Bureau stated that the electronic mail systems (as well as other basic systems) proposed in the RFP would be of commercial quality, suitably scaled for the anticipated needs of the project. The International Bureau also announced that DVD-ROM drives would be provided in each of the PCs installed in I.P. Offices under the WIPONET implementation program.

19. Since the RFP was ready to be issued, the SCIT Plenary agreed to consider Task No. 35 completed. In connection therewith, the SCIT Plenary noted the decision by the IIWG to continue participation of the Task Force in the WIPONET development process (see document SCIT/WG/1/12, paragraph 10).

20. The SCIT Plenary agreed to request the International Bureau to produce a document outlining technical details needed by the Member States to coordinate their internal networks with WIPONET. This document would be prepared as soon as technical specifications were available from the successful vendors. The suggested target date for issuing this document to intellectual property offices was September 1999. The SCIT Plenary noted that it considered the International Bureau's RFP timelines to be challenging and proposed that the International Bureau proceed in an expeditious yet thorough manner to achieve these goals. In other matters, the International Bureau informed the SCIT Plenary that working documents and reports requested by the SCIT Working Groups would be made available at the next Working Groups meeting, rather than at the SCIT Plenary session.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DIGITAL LIBRARIES (IPDL) PROJECT (Document SCIT/2/3)

21. Presentations were given by the EPO of the esp@cenet service and by the International Bureau of the latest developments to the WIPO IPDL. The latter focussed on the Madrid Express Database, which would give free public Internet access to a subset of Madrid data and would shortly go live. (For more details of the contents of the database see <http://ipdl.wipo.int>).

22. The SCIT Plenary discussed the proposals in respect of the future directions for IPDL development as outlined in document SCIT/2/3 and decided as follows:

(a) Dataset

The SCIT Plenary considered that although duplication of datasets was not necessarily undesirable, cooperation rather than competition should be the main theme and, of course, resource constraints should not be overlooked. Significant database collections might, however, because of the anticipated volume of search requests, warrant availability at a number of sites. The proposal to capture the backfile of PCT applications in character-coded form to support full-text searching, therefore, should be explored. In doing so, the International Bureau should, however, consider the alternatives to full OCR of the backfile that might be achieved by drawing on the current availability of a subset of the PCT applications in character-coded form at the EPO and of US equivalents for 40% of the PCT cases.

(b) Language Coverage

The need for language interface options to IPDL services in each of the United Nations languages was agreed. Pilot project activity should be initiated by the International Bureau in respect of the Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish languages.

(c) Functionality

The current variations in the levels of functionality in the database services provided by intellectual property offices were noted together with the reference to evaluation of additional facilities including the possible extension of the INPI natural language system for support of search and classification using the IPC. While recognizing the relevance of differences in functionality depending on the type of user community addressed, the SCIT Plenary raised a note of caution and requested that the points raised in (a) above in respect of Dataset should equally apply when considering functionality enhancements.

(d) Manpower Resourcing

The SCIT Plenary discussed the possible participation of the private sector. While agreeing in principle to the use of outsourcing to develop additional functionality (e.g., facilities to support natural language searching), it was felt that there was a need for a clear definition of the private sector's role. The question of public responsibility and the role of Government in providing public access to intellectual property information and that of commercial providers needed to be addressed.

23. The above discussions, including the role of the private sector, highlighted the need for strategic planning (see paragraphs 37 to 39, below) to, e.g., more clearly define the target audiences and the services to be provided and, as such, to better direct the IPDL and other IT developments.

EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

24. The SCIT Plenary noted, with gratitude, presentations by the Delegations of Japan, the United States of America and the International Bureau on the Trilateral Web Site, Trilateral Data Exchange Standards and the PCT Automation Support System, respectively. The Delegation of Singapore informed the meeting of its Protein Patent Query System, a free Web-based pilot service jointly offered by the I.P. Office and a contractor.

MONITOR THE CHANGEOVER TO ELECTRONIC DATA CARRIERS AND UPDATE
TECHNICAL GUIDELINES AS NECESSARY (Task No. 1)

25. The International Bureau introduced the item with reference to the "Statement of Principles concerning the Changeover to Electronic Data Carriers for the Exchange of Patent Documents" (Part 8.4 of the *Handbook on Industrial Property Information and Documentation*) which was determined under the Permanent Committee on Industrial Property Information (PCIPI) in 1995. The current SCIT task allowed for update reports to be given by offices in respect of their use of electronic media for exchange purposes.

26. The Delegations of the United States of America and the EPO gave presentations detailing planned changes in their current use of CD-ROM for exchange use. The information provided included the proposed future use of DVD-ROM and the migration of EPO products to the MIMOSA platform. Information was also given in respect of related data format changes and (in the case of the US) the impact of publication cycle changes on the volume of patents published between April and July of the year 1999 and timing of paper distribution from April 1999. The Delegation of the United States of America also informed the meeting that with effect from January 1, 2000, all exchange would be in electronic form, i.e., there would be no paper or microfiche distribution. The Delegation of the EPO reported that the move of national ESPACE CD-ROM products to the MIMOSA platform was dependent on the request of the national office. Copies of the presentations will be made available on the Information Technologies (SCIT) area of the WIPO Web site (<http://www.wipo.int>) under the heading "SCIT Documentation."

27. The SCIT Plenary noted the move to carriers other than facsimile image CD-ROM which was the media on which the current technical guidelines provided as an appendix to the Statement of Principles were based. There was now an urgent need to update the guidelines to include both mixed-mode CD-ROM and DVD-ROM media. The SCIT Plenary requested the International Bureau to seek the views of the USPTO and the EPO for a proposal to provide a solution for the additional requirements.

28. The International Bureau reported that the impact of the move to DVD-ROM would be taken into account in respect of PC equipment provided to the Member States under the various WIPO treaties. PCs delivered under the WIPONET project would also be provided with DVD-ROM drives (see paragraph 18, above).

PAPER BY THE PDG CONCERNING THE CONTENTS OF WEB SITES
(Document SCIT/2/5)

29. The SCIT Plenary noted, with appreciation, a report by the Patent Documentation Group (PDG) regarding the presentation and contents of Web sites provided by I.P. Offices through the Internet. A number of delegations found the report, which was contained in the Annex to document SCIT/2/5, very useful.

30. The Delegation of the United States of America, in supporting the proposal by the International Bureau to have the suggestions, comments and recommendations contained in the PDG report further elaborated by a Working Group of the SCIT, offered to present a paper for consideration at the next meeting of the SDWG. That paper would focus on minimum requirements and basic instructions.

31. The SCIT Plenary agreed to instruct the SDWG to elaborate a paper which would give guidance on the presentation and contents of Web sites of I.P. Offices that should not be limited to patents for inventions but cover all industrial property rights. The SCIT Plenary requested the Delegation of the United States of America to provide the paper mentioned in paragraph 30, above, to the International Bureau by June 30, 1999, in order to have it circulated to SCIT members in good time before the second session of the SCIT Working Groups. The SCIT Plenary advised the SDWG to take into consideration, when preparing the said paper, earlier discussions on I.P. Office Web sites that were held within the scope of PCIPI projects P 16/96 and P 24/96.

OBSERVER STATUS TO DERWENT (Document SCIT/2/6)

32. The SCIT Plenary considered the request made by the private commercial firm Derwent Information LTD, a provider of information services in the field of patents, to be granted observer status in the meetings of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies. The SCIT Plenary recognized the merits and value of the services provided by such a firm; however, it deemed it inappropriate to grant the requested status on account, *inter alia*, of the commercial nature of the firm concerned. For the same reason the SCIT Plenary did not grant observer status to MicroPatent LLC, which had also requested such status in its letter of February 4, 1999.

SCIT WORK PROGRAM (Document SCIT/2/4)

Electronic filing

33. The SCIT Plenary noted a proposal by the International Bureau that explained the urgent need to have available for PCT purposes, a technical standard for electronic filing, processing and storage of patent applications. As such a new WIPO standard would also be of great importance with regard to the proposed Patent Law Treaty (PLT), the SCIT Plenary agreed to the creation of an appropriate Task within the SCIT Work Program to be handled with high priority (Task No. 37 "Prepare a draft technical standard for electronic filing, processing and storage of patent applications"). The SCIT Plenary agreed to have the Task dealt with by a new task force consisting of technical specialists of the industrial property offices.

34. Before March 5, 1999, a circular letter would be sent out by the International Bureau, by e-mail, in order to invite offices to nominate their technical specialists. It was the understanding of the SCIT Plenary that the task force would work by means of electronic communication. The SCIT Plenary welcomed the offer by the Trilateral Offices that they would provide, as soon as possible, a first draft of the standard for review and finalization by the task force. There was agreement that the timeliness for completion of the draft standard should be closely coordinated with the timelines relevant for the PLT. The final draft would be presented to the SCIT Plenary for approval.

ISAF

35. The SCIT Plenary also noted a proposal by the Delegation of the United States of America concerning the elaboration of an International Standard Application Format (ISAF) and that was outlined in a paper presented during the session.

36. The SCIT Plenary agreed to create the following new Task within the SCIT Work Program: Task No. 38 “Elaborate an international standard application format” and to entrust the task force to be established to prepare the above-mentioned electronic filing standard (see paragraphs 33 and 34, above), to also handle Task No. 38 and to present a final draft standard to the SCIT Plenary for approval.

Strategic planning

37. The SCIT Plenary discussed an initiative by the USPTO that was explained in their letter of February 4, 1999, aimed at the establishing of a SCIT strategic information technology plan to implement business goals and a vision for the twenty-first century of the Standing Committee on Information Technologies.

38. After careful consideration of the various possible approaches for elaborating the strategic plan, the SCIT Plenary agreed to the following concept and timetable to carry out the work:

(a) Preparation by the International Bureau of a draft outline of the strategic plan and circulation to the Member States, Member Organizations and Observers	by February 28, 1999
(b) Comments and contributions by Member States, Member Organizations and Observers	by March 31, 1999
(c) Elaboration by the International Bureau of a draft strategic plan and circulation to the Member States, Member Organizations and Observers	by April 30, 1999
(d) Review and approval of the strategic plan	by June 14 and 15, 1999 (SCIT/3).

39. The SCIT Plenary agreed to the suggestion by the International Bureau to report to the Assemblies of the Member States of WIPO, in September 1999, on SCIT activities since the establishing of the Committee, on the basis of a document to be prepared by the Secretariat. That document would also include information with respect to the elaboration of the above-mentioned strategic plan.

40. Finally, the SCIT Plenary reviewed the Tasks of the SCIT Work Program and approved its revised version, which is reproduced as Annex IV to this report.

41. The International Bureau provided an oral report on activities and plans by WIPO in respect of the WIPO *Handbook on Industrial Property Information and Documentation* (on paper and on CD-ROM), the publication and collection of *Industrial Property Statistics* (CD-ROM and Internet), the *Journal of Patent Associated Literature* (JOPAL CD-ROM), the List of Periodicals Established under PCT Rule 34.1(b)(iii), the IPC:CLASS CD-ROM and the Annual Technical Reports on Patent, Trademark and Industrial Design Information Activities of the SCIT members, as well as on the documents related to industrial property information and documentation that are available on the WIPO Web site.

NEXT MEETINGS

42. In accordance with the decision reflected in paragraph 38, above, the SCIT Plenary noted that the time period June 14 to 15, 1999, was reserved for holding its third session, in Geneva. Meetings to be convened in the second half of 1999 would be determined during the SCIT/3 Plenary session.

43. The draft of this report was sent to the participants to the second session of the SCIT Plenary and adopted by correspondence.

[Annexes follow]